

# Dehydration



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People usually take for granted the importance of water not only to their daily existence and but especially their normal bodily functioning. It is perhaps the only resource which is vital to many of man's activities. This paper attempts to emphasize this importance by giving evidence to the following inquiries: " Why is water essential to health maintenance?" " What are the functions of water in the body?" " What happens to the body when it does not get the water it needs " Compare and contrast how different electrolytes-sodium, potassium, and chloride functions in the body?" " What effects do alcohol and caffeine have on hydration levels in the body?" " What step can people take to ensure they do not become dehydrated?" Discussion ~Why is water essential to health maintenance? Water is indispensable to health maintenance because a person's body is made up of two thirds water.

In fact the baby's body constitutes approximately 77% of the body's components while a grown up man constitutes around 65%. There is a little variation with the grown up woman which constitutes 68% while on the other hand the elderly has approximately 50% water in his/her body as well. ~What are the functions of water in the body?

The functions that water essentially does include

- Regulating body temperature
- Lubricating the joints • Lessening the burden on the kidneys and liver by flushing out waste products
- Carrying nutrients and oxygen to the cells
- Helping dissolve the minerals and other nutrients to make them accessible to the body

- Protects the body organs/tissues
- Moistens tissues such as those in the mouth, eyes and nose. (Source: "Functions of water in the body", 2007).

What happens to the body when it does not get the water it needs? Because it is essential to life, the absence or even the lack of water leads to many deficiencies and even many of today's ailments. Primary is dehydration, where the body's supply of water is not enough for the body to run in its optimum level. Dehydration (or loss of body fluid) refers to a "dangerous lack of water in the body resulting from inadequate intake of fluids or excessive loss through sweating, vomiting, or diarrhea" (Encarta Dictionary, 2006).

Since the two main functions of water in the metabolic process include the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to various parts of the body and the removal of toxins and waste materials from it, the lack of water results to complex functional problems that involve these two main functions for metabolism. American medical doctor F. Batmanghelidj is foremost in the field to promote the main diseases effecting deterioration in the body's functioning primarily due to dire lack of water or insufficient of hydration. His book "Your Body's Many Cries for Water" emphasizes that "Chronic dehydration is the root cause of most major degenerative diseases of the human body; the causes of which were not clear until now."

What effects do alcohol and caffeine have on hydration levels in the body? Diuretics are substances that cause the "increased flow of urine" (Encarta 2006) which are basically what alcohol and caffeine do to the body. Hence, many people's resort to the excessive use alcohol, soft drinks and coffee

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which contain caffeine may significantly lower the hydration levels in the body, thus instead of supplying the necessary fluids for hydration, these substances cause the fluids to drain from the body through the urine. ~What step can people take to ensure they do not become dehydrated? Thirst may be an indicator that dehydration is occurring in the human body or that excessive fluid is being drained.

However, it is not entirely a reliable gauge by which people should depend or rely upon so as they may take their cue that hydration is needed. According to studies, thirst may not be present when dehydration is occurring or when the body is in short supply of body fluids; this is especially true with the people in aging years. When excessive perspiration is experienced, when people overeat, vomit, or when the body undergoes heat exhaustion, dehydration occurs and the body must replace this immediately. Any individual is able to detect the hydration levels by the amount, frequency and the color of urine rather than by perception of thirst (Encarta 2006).